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ABSTRACT

The Speaking across the Curriculum (SAC) program at Hamline University in Minnesota is based upon principles similar to those of many Writing across the Curriculum (WAC) programs and is complementary to the WAC program at Hamline. The SAC program requires students to take two speaking intensive courses as well as a freshman seminar in which both discussion and writing are emphasized. The program focuses on process as opposed to product, emphasizes practice and analysis, and expects that oral communication activities will be central to the learning objectives of course content (not just an extra element added on to an already existing course). In the 1989-90 school year the program had 53 speaking intensive courses in 20 major programs. So far, faculty response has been positive, and student response has been very positive. Far more than a process of composition or of articulating ideas in symbolic form, communication in the classroom is a matter of individuals engaged in a communicative interaction affected by such issues as social status, power, dominance issues, normative constraints, and other factors. The failure to recognize the demands upon speakers related to the social implications of their communication creates fundamental problems when trying to understand how speech works in the process of learning. Research in speech and communication has much to offer those who use oral communication processes in their teaching. (Seventeen references are attached.) (SR)

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Speaking Across the Curriculum:

The Hamline Experience

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Speaking Across the Curriculum:

The Hamline Experience

When he asked me to be on this panel Ted suggested that I talk about what we've done at Hamline, and also to highlight one issue I think is especially important as it pertains to Speaking Across the Curriculum. I've decided to take a fairly pragmatic approach and attempt to do what I was asked. Not being familiar with the norms of this association, perhaps doing what one is asked is typical. However, I suspect you are like those of us in Speech Communication: we tend to start with what we're asked to do, and in all likelihood we end up doing something quite different.

Be that as it may, this time I will try to conform to my assignment and talk first about the SAC program at Hamline. I also will take this as an opportunity to address a concern I have about the way speech and speaking tend to be viewed, an issue I think is especially important.

When I came to Hamline in 1985, Speaking Across the Curriculum (SAC) and Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) had been legislated by the faculty. These two additions to the curriculum were part of a larger curricular reform which came to be known as the Hamline Plan. Under the new curriculum students would take 4 writing intensive (WI) courses, one each year, and 2 speaking intensive (SI) courses taken at any time. In addition, each first-year student would take a Freshman Seminar in which both discussion and writing are emphasized. I was hired as the "Director of Oral Communication" in spring of 1985, as was a new "Director of Writing", Dr. Alice Moorhead.

It soon became apparent that the faculty had some idea of what they wanted in a WAC program. In addition, Professor Moorhead was knowledgeable and clear about what a WAC program should be. However, no one knew what SAC was beyond some vague notions that students ought to talk more in class.

I was very lucky to have my colleague in writing, for her background in the fundamental philosophy behind WAC was invaluable and instrumental in the vision of SAC which began to evolve. As we began shaping these two parts of the new Hamline curriculum, we strongly believed that these two programs ought to be complementary and ought to build upon each other. We took the position that we were dealing with two different modes of a common process. Therefore, part of our task was to show the similarities, but in addition we needed to emphasize that these two processes have fundamental differences. We also felt it important to build these programs upon common pedagogical foundations. It saw it as critical, then, to draw upon the research and knowledge in both fields which pertain to both fields.

We also believed it was important to ground the approaches to these programs with the values we saw at Hamline. At Hamline we were fortunate in that the values of the faculty, who are committed to helping students learn, fit well with the philosophical underpinnings of WAC and the SAC approach being envisioned. The pedagogical approach which views language as intricately and integrally related to learning serves as the basis for both the WAC and the SAC programs at Hamline. Thus, we built upon the work of people like James Britton (1979), Douglas Barnes (1980; 1984), and Mike Torbe (1980; 1981), who as most of you know, were critical figures in developing the theoretical grounds for emphasizing the composing *process* rather than focusing solely on the

product. Barnes and Torbe, in addition, looked carefully at the role of social interaction in the learning process: the role of the *oral* communication process in learning.[1]

The SAC program at Hamline, then, is based upon similar principles as those of many WAC programs: a focus of process as opposed to product, an emphasis upon practice *and* analysis, the expectation that oral communication activities will be central to the learning objectives of course content. That is, oral communication activities are not just an additional extra thing that one adds on to an already existing course.

The program has been well received. In 1985, our pilot year, 7 departments and 9 instructors were involved. In the present school year, we have 17 departments (20 major programs), 32 instructors, and 53 courses. Next year we plan at least 70 courses, involving 17 departmental units and 34 instructors. Next year's numbers will increase as new faculty go through the Language Across the Curriculum (LAC) seminar and begin planning their courses. Logistically, we have encouraged faculty to do WI courses first because of the stricter graduation requirements. At the present time we have over 100 courses designated WI, very close to the target for number of courses that need to be designated WI every year. Now faculty can more reasonably attend to the task of developing SI courses. I have a target of between 70 and 80 SI courses offered per year, with some available in each major.

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Hamline University: Speaking Intensive Courses

	Departments	Instructors	Courses
1985-86	7	9	13
1986-87	10	20	31
1987-88	10	28	43
1988-89	14	32	56
1989-90	17	32	53
1990-91	17	34	70

Major programs involved: Anthropology, Art, Biology, Communication Arts, Education, English, French, German, Health, Legal Studies, Management & Economics, Math, Music, Philosophy, Physical Education, Physics, Political Science, Religion, Sociology, Spanish, Theatre.

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[1] It should be noted that these individuals based much of their theoretical rationale upon the work of people like Dell Hymes, L.S. Vygotsky, A. R. Luria, and numerous other theoreticians who write about the interaction of language with cognitive development.

Student response has been very positive. We have found that students become interested in Hamline because of the both the Writing and Speaking requirements, and they have come to expect that they will be involved publically in some way in class. Classroom norms have noticeably changed. Students are much more likely to call out in class, and students are more likely to see a class presentation as an opportunity to share knowledge than as a burden of performance to overcome. Formalized student responses to SI courses indicate that over 90% of the students think the SI approach helped them learn course content, helped them develop their own oral verbal skills, and helped them gain confidence.

Faculty response has also been positive. Those faculty who have gone beyond simply assigning speeches in class have had the most positive responses. Faculty using a combination of oral verbal activities report that students begin to understand and be more comfortable with the legitimacy of using oral verbal involvement to acquire knowledge as well as to internalize it. Those who focus on discussion in their classes have an opportunity to help students see the relationship of oral verbal interaction to knowledge formation as well as discovery.

Faculty have been remarkably creative. I have learned much about teaching by working with these wonderful minds thinking about teaching. Examples of classes include:

Engineering Mechanics--Students present problems. In preparation, the class discusses what makes a problem presentation understandable, the relationship of organization to understanding, the characteristics of a good explanation in Physics, the relationship of visuals to words, and similar factors. In addition to abstract problem presentation, each student is an "expert witness" in an engineering case. In this exercise, which is conducted in the Moot Courtroom of the Hamline Law School, students are confronted with clearly articulating their analysis of an engineering disaster, presenting it in argument form, and putting it into lay language so a non-engineering jury can understand the analysis.

The British Novel in the 80's--Students participate in discussion, discuss discussion, lead discussions, evaluate discussions, and focus attention upon the kinds of questions that need to be asked about a text. In addition, students look at the social interaction in the learning context, and consider the ways in which they can utilize the questions posed by others.

Intermediate German Conversation--At Hamline, a language conversation course is not automatically SI. In this course, students not only speak German, they discuss the process of communication as it occurs in German culture--and they do so in German. This course is designed so that students are presenting prepared role-plays which highlight some aspect of German culture, and then they must, in their own words, present (in German) an analysis of the role-plays. They receive coaching and feedback on their presentations in preparation for the class, and they also have several chances to be engaged in this activity.

Some courses utilize debate formats, some use formal oral exams, some have focused almost entirely on informal interaction. The breadth of creativity once instructors go beyond seeing SAC as "public speaking" is invigorating.

I want to emphasize here that there is a difference between using oral verbal activities and helping students learn about oral communication in the learning process. This difference is also highlighted in WAC literature about writing, but it tends to be overlooked when it comes to talk even in WAC literature. For example, currently many teachers have students give presentations in class,

or have students work in groups to prepare a class project, or require students to present problems at the board, or have class discussion, or use peer groups to critique writing assignments, or require students to read drafts of writing aloud to the class. All these activities currently happen without the SAC approach. What makes the SAC approach different?

First, the focus on process. Oral verbal products don't just happen. As with writing, there is a process involved. This leads to the second point, the need to talk about or analyze the oral communication process. Discuss class discussion. Talk about the questioning process. Take apart the expectations for presentations and criteria for evaluation of formal oral products. Take apart the process for developing the more formal oral products, in order to help students see what is necessary. Don't assume group work involves equal participation by all. Instead, analyze the functional nature of group roles, look at the emergence of group culture and the relationship to the communication inputs of the participants. Help students see their communicative choices, and the consequences of their choices within the setting of a given discipline.

After my overview of the approach to SAC we take at Hamline, it should come as no surprise that the primary concern regarding SAC is how speaking tends to be viewed. I wish my concern were just with those who think they don't know much about the interaction of language with learning. It isn't. I am also concerned about the ways in which speech is viewed by those who have done a substantial amount of writing about the language-learning interaction, including those who have provided a substantial theoretical rationale for WAC. While we have built the program at Hamline upon many of the theoretical positions also fundamental to the WAC approach to writing, there are also serious misconceptions about the oral communication process evident in much of this literature.

Our understanding of the language-learning interaction is advanced through discussions of language functions based upon the work of people like James Britton. At the same time, there are problemmatic assumptions about the abilities of students to engage in these language activities. Approaches to learning which depend upon student oral verbal interaction must additionally take into account the interactive character of the communicative event. Communication in the classroom is more than a matter of an individual using language in isolation, it is a matter of individuals engaged in a communicative *interaction.*

The failure to recognize the demands upon speakers related to the social implications of their communication creates fundamental problems when trying to understand how speech works in the process of learning. For example, Britton, et al. (1979, p. 82) state that the expressive function of language is the function performed by speech. According to these authors the expressive is the mode that we use when we "relate to each other in speech." It is through the expressive that "in times of family or national crises, we talk with our own people and attempt to work our way toward some kind of resolution." The assumption about speech here is troubling: that speech is free from outside demands of task or audience. The identification of the expressive with speech fails to recognize the extraordinary demands which are placed upon participants in oral interaction.

Certainly oral communication is not the most intimate nor the least demanding form of language use.[2] Speaking is not like writing, but the difference is not that speech is more intimate. Oral interaction not only exposes one to the impersonal authority of the professor, but to one's peers who are in many ways more formidable and intimidating. Personal vulnerability is heightened because of the nature of the audience. This is true whether a student is making a formal presentation or whether that student is simply speaking up in a class discussion. To orally participate is more than a public display of one's knowledge and one's analytic ability. It is also a public commitment to one's values, beliefs, and attitudes. Students who choose to make their thinking public also expose themselves to the sanctions of their peers in ways we, as instructors outside of the social circle of our students, are simply unaware. The potential consequences of one's decision to produce or not produce a communication orally are far more than a grade, content learning, or cognitive development. They involve social relationships which are equally if not more important than the content learning for many students.

The misconception that oral communication is free of outside demands is compounded by many researchers' predominant focus on *language* in contrast to *communication*. Cues of meaning tend to be discussed as existent solely in the oral verbal *language* artifact. The meaning cues occurring through interactive processes tend to be ignored unless encoded linguistically (e.g., Halliday, 1975; Bruner 1975). This bias has been augmented by continuing work in *Language* Across the Curriculum which does not provide insight into the oral *communication* components of the learning process, including those factors which influence the choices learners and teachers makes about their oral verbal participation.

The qualitative character of the communicative interaction matters. Normative patterns of conversation that students bring with them into the classroom influence the learning process. Studies of student learning styles at the elementary and secondary levels have documented that learning is enhanced when classroom structure is consistent with the normative communication patterns in the culture (Jordan, Au, & Joesting, 1983; Olson, 1980). For example, in cultures where the communication norms are largely participatory, an approach toward learning which utilizes group oral verbal interaction would be highly consistent, but only if the kind of interaction is consistent with the meanings that the patterns of interaction hold within the dominant culture (More, 1987; Rhodes, 1988; Vogt, Jordan & Tharp, 1987). Interaction which does not conform to the cultural norms does not result in differences in learning outcomes. Simply participation in some sort of general sense is not the answer. The qualities and characteristics of the participation placed in conjunction with the individuals involved are what matter.

The literature which argues for increased verbal interaction in the classroom, whether writing classrooms or otherwise, is disturbingly devoid of evidence that practioners of this educational method recognize demands upon oral interaction from interactants which influence the communicative choices of learners which in turn influence the learning process.[3] Empirical research

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[2] Dell Hymes' (1968) discussion of the functions of speech details some of these demands, not the least of which is the need for speakers to recognize and conform to the prevailing functional type predominant in the communicative interaction.

[3] British researchers Douglas Barnes (1984), Mike Torbe, and Peter Medway have done the most work in this area. Torbe and Medway (1981) for example, began to identify group processes that seem to occur in learning interactions. Yet these authors tend to focus primarily upon the ideational

examining classroom interaction also suffers from the failure to attend to interactive issues enacted through the oral communicative choices. Social status, power, dominance issues, normative constraints, comparison of self-abilities with others' abilities are not overtly recognized or addressed . Characteristics of the interaction, including the nonverbal, interruptions, paralinguistics, and topic shifts are not described at all except in a minimal amount of research detailing the sociolinguistic qualities of classroom communication.[4] The influence upon communication patterns of gender differences, the social power related to those differences, and tensions related to sexual attraction and interests are also not addressed. In all age groups there are the social developmental concerns of the age group in addition to the cognitive developmental issues. The qualitative character of the communication changes with developmental stage, yet the qualitative character of the communication is not addressed in any but the broadest terms. All of these factors have substantial consequences for oral verbal usage, and consequently for learning.

Composition instructors who use group work, individuals in other disciplines who use peer groups as a vehicle for idea discovery, educators who argue for increasing student involvement in the classroom under the auspices of "active learning" or LAC or WAC all need to acknowledge the interactive components and consequences to students of oral verbal participation. Aspects of the communicative interaction that need to be considered in this endeavor include the demands of the communicative act upon the speaker. In addition, any interaction between language and learning at the content level will be influenced by the communicative functions which occur at the relationship level: the influence, for example, of power or dominance on who talks, and this in turn privileging one learning approach over others. The ramifications *outside* the classroom influence what is said *in* the classroom. The result is that the ideas available for use by the learners are limited, and learning of content is affected. The failure to recognize communicative interaction variables means a failure to recognize critical factors which may influence learning outcomes overall.

Conclusion

When confronted with the question of teaching oral communication and teaching writing, we should recognize that we can and should learn from each other's research and methods. Those of us in speech have much to learn about the process of composition, and my exposure to the literature providing the theoretical rationale for WAC has been invaluable to me in understanding more about the ways in which students discover what they have to say. At the same time I would make a plea for recognizing what research in speech and communication has to offer those who use oral communication processes in support of learning endeavors within their own disciplines. Any who use oral participation of students need to be aware of the fact that far more is going on than a process of composition or of articulating ideas in symbolic form.

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interaction rather than looking at the relationship between the evolution of content and the social constraints of the verbal interaction.

[4] David Olson's (1980) sociolinguistic approach is valuable and should be mentioned here. By emphasizing the social force of illocutionary acts he bases much of his analysis on speech act theory and a rules approach to understanding classroom interaction.

Speech is not a simple matter. When we recognize the unique characteristics and demands of both writing *and* speaking we will be fairer to our students and we will provide the educational support to our faculties who are engaged in teaching students how to learn.

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CCCC, March 1990
Speaking Across the Curriculum: The Hamline Experience
Patricia R. Palmerton, Director of Oral Communication

Hamline University
Speaking Intensive Courses: Statement of Objectives

A Speaking Intensive course focuses upon the oral communication needs of students within each discipline. A Speaking Intensive course will:

1. Designate specific oral communication learning objectives appropriate to the course and the discipline.

2. Provide opportunities for students to practice and analyze oral communication behaviors.

3. Focus upon the oral communication process as well as the product.

Characteristics of a Speaking Intensive course might include: several opportunities for oral communication experiences; intervention, coaching, and developmental response from the instructor or peer groups; use of small groups or class discussion as a means of learning, with an emphasis upon developing oral participation skills or upon understanding discussion dynamics.

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Thoughts & important points regarding SAC programs generally:

1. **Faculty support is imperative**
   A curricular program such as SAC will not work unless the majority of the faculty are willing to do what's necessary to implement it.

2. **Administrative support is imperative**
   The college of university administration must be committed to providing the financial support needed to implement it (this means compensation for faculty development, salary commitment to those charged with implementing the logistics, and supportive structures like video-equipment and facilities for working with students).

3. **Administration and faculty education is needed**
   SAC is not something that is a replacement for what goes on in speech courses. It is an ongoing vehicle by which students will have opportunities for developing oral communication abilities.

4. **There must be a systematic program of faculty development**

   a. Many faculty members don't know what oral communication competence involves. In our research, uninitiated faculty members were *unable* to assess oral communication abilities on a standard assessment instrument. On many items which uninitiated faculty did assess

(primarily non-public speaking items), their scores correlated negatively with the scores given by trained raters.

b. Faculty have a tendency to think SAC is entirely a matter of having students give presentations or debates in class

c. At Hamline, no faculty member can designate a course SI or WI without attending a Language Across the Curriculum (LAC) seminar. While we are constantly pressured to bend on this, so far we are maintaining our position. We strongly believe it is important for the faculty outside of Composition and outside of Speech Communication to understand the pedagogical foundations which we see as crucial to implementation of courses in which writing and oral communication activities are integrated with the learning process.

c. At Hamline, all new faculty are required to attend the LAC seminar as part of new faculty orientation. They receive one course release time as "stipend" for the total orientation, of which LAC seminar is only one part. At the present time this is funded by a grant.

d. We are starting to offer "advanced" seminars for those who have been teaching in the program. These have been well received by faculty who have begun viewing the seminar work as helping them do what they want to do rather than as an unreasonable demand upon their already overworked schedules.

5. **SAC is threatening to many faculty members**
   Most faculty already assign papers and are familiar with dealing with writing and student writing. They often avoid any assessment of oral communication and don't know how to do it. They themselves may experience a great deal of reticence or they may fundamentally oppose a course design in which students must orally participate. Any program must be flexible enough to deal with these faculty concerns.

6. **Recognize the differences between oral communication and written communication**
   Student experiences are different, and the demands which the two different modes place upon students are substantially different. Failing to deal with the differences is confusing to students and sets them up for failure in using oral verbal work in the learning endeavor.